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QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT July 1, 2015 – September 30, 2015

Countering Violent Extremism in the Middle East & North Africa (CoVE-MENA) Task Order

October 29, 2015

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List of Acronyms & Abbreviations

CoP	Community of Practice
CoVE-MENA	Countering Violent Extremism in the Middle East and North Africa
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
CSO	Civil Society Organization
Daesh	al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
Q3	Quarter Three
Q4	Quarter Four
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
VE	Violent Extremism
VEO	Violent Extremist Organization

I. Introduction

This fourth Quarterly Performance Report for the Countering Violent Extremism in the Middle East and North Africa (CoVE-MENA) Task Order covers the period July 1, 2015 to September 30, 2015, (referred to henceforth as Q4). Highlights from the reporting period include:

- **Research:** CoVE-MENA completed its first research study this quarter, on the topic of Women and Violent Extremism in the MENA region. A research brief based on the study was circulated at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Summit in September 2015 in meetings with stakeholders working on and researching VE and CVE. The report provides new insights into the various roles that women play in Violent Extremism (VE), and useful recommendations for policymakers on ways in which gender can be more deliberately addressed in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programming.
- **Training:** Early in Q4, CoVE-MENA produced and submitted its report on the CVE training that took place in Nicosia, Cyprus in June 2015. The report included detailed information on workshop sessions and key workshop outputs and evaluation findings.
- **Pilots:** As part of the Maghreb-Sahel Pilot activity, CoVE-MENA held its First Regional Workshop, entitled *Participatory and Collaborative Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism*, from September 7-10, 2015, in Casablanca, Morocco. According to evaluations, the workshop was a success: all activities were well-received and productive. More significantly, this workshop has and will inform future pilot activities aimed at further collaboration, exchange, and capacity building of workshop participants. CoVE-MENA also launched a Community of Practice (CoP) for workshop participants in September using a secure Facebook group as its platform.

II. CVE Context in MENA

The past several months have seen a continued moderate to high risk of VE in various parts of MENA. In the Levant, the devastating humanitarian crisis and civil war in Syria persists, which has led to mass migration of refugees from Syria and Iraq to Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and various parts of Europe. In North Africa, several VE incidents and the high contribution of VE fighters to Daesh from Tunisia indicate that the sub-region is also vulnerable to VE risks. In the Gulf, Yemen has been plagued by fighting between Houthi rebels and government forces, backed by a Saudi-led coalition.

Between July and September 2015, the humanitarian crisis in Syria and Iraq worsened, and the human toll is alarming. As of early October 2015, an estimated 250,000 Syrians have been killed and more than 11 million displaced (internally and internationally) due to the past 4.5 years of civil war between the Assad government, rebel groups, and Islamic State (Daesh).¹ Refugees have been forced to undertake arduous, dangerous journeys to leave Syria and surrounding areas, with most aiming to arrive in European countries.²

¹ "Syria: the story of the conflict." <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868>. October 9, 2015.

² While Syrians are currently the largest group seeking asylum in Europe and the group drawing the most media attention, there are also significant influxes of refugees from Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, among other places.

On the way and at their final destinations, refugees face a mixed reception; neighboring and European countries are ill-equipped to deal with such a vast number of refugee applications with a glaring lack of asylum infrastructure. Anti-immigrant sentiments fester in many European countries, often racist and Islamophobic in origin; some Europeans believe that Syrian and Iraqi refugees will increase the risk of domestic terrorism in Europe. At the same time, the argument could be made that the neighboring countries' and the European Union's ineffective management of the refugee crisis might actually breed the conditions (unemployment, marginalized youth, poor service delivery, lack of resources) conducive to VE recruitment.

Politically, the situation in Syria has been further complicated by the conflict turning into a proxy war of sorts, with Iran, Russia, and Lebanon's Hezbollah supporting the Assad government, and Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Western states supporting Sunni-dominated rebel groups. Politicians, security forces, and development practitioners alike continue to be stymied by the civil war and how to respond to development needs. This points to the continued difficulty for development agencies to operate in the Levant; humanitarian response and military actions are the priority, while there is currently little space for CVE programming.

Several incidents over the past few months point to a continuing VE risk in the Maghreb region in various ways. This includes an attack by a gunman in late June 2015 at a beach resort in Sousse, Tunisia that killed 38 (mainly foreign) individuals. Tunisia declared a state of emergency on July 4, 2015, which was not lifted until the first week of October.³ Tunisia is also by far the highest contributor of foreign recruits to Daesh. In neighboring Algeria, al Qaeda-affiliated gunmen attacked soldiers in Ain Defla in July 2015. Moreover, illegal traffickers in the region, particularly in Libya, continue to facilitate extremely dangerous sea journeys for sub-Saharan migrants hoping to leave from Africa to Europe. Many traffickers charge large sums of money for their services and swindle desperate migrants without following through on commitments. These migrants are driven by poverty, unemployment, and political instability in their home countries, often due to VEO activity.

In March 2015, the Houthis, a group of Zaidi Shia rebels, gained control of several parts of Yemen, including the capital Sana'a, forcing internationally-recognized president Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi to flee. Pro-Hadi forces retook several provinces in mid-July, with the support of Saudi-led coalition airstrikes. As a result of escalating violence in the past five months, according to the United Nations, approximately 4,500 civilians have been killed, 13 million people face food shortages, and 1.5 million individuals are internally displaced.⁴ The civil war has worsened an already unstable climate in a country wrought with corruption, unemployment, poor public service delivery, and sectarian conflict. In other similar contexts, civil war and such conditions have created an enabling environment conducive to VE.

³ "Tunisia lifts state of emergency imposed after beach attack." <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/02/us-tunisia-security-idUSKCN0RW1TB20151002>. October 2, 2015.

⁴ "Yemen conflict: Saudi-led strike 'hits wrong troops.'" <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34563528>. October 17, 2015.

III. Task Order Management and Coordination

Personnel

After the First Regional Workshop, CoVE-MENA and USAID determined the need for a change in staffing structure for key personnel, adding a Senior Technical Advisor position and limiting the field positions to one Field Program Representative. CoVE-MENA is working with USAID to determine how the staffing changes may manifest in the near future and who will be playing the various key roles. More information is provided under Plans for Next Quarter.

Contractual Issues

CoVE-MENA received verbal indication of approval of Grants Under Contract (GUC) authority for the Task Order. In the coming quarter, CoVE-MENA plans to submit a letter to the Contracting Officer (CO) requesting GUC Authority approval in writing.

Coordination with USAID

Throughout Q4, USAID and CoVE-MENA collaborated significantly on each of the three project components. For the First Regional Workshop, CoVE-MENA held several meetings with USAID on workshop design, including a Workshop Agenda Review meeting on August 12, 2015 and a Workshop Dry Run on August 26, 2015. After both meetings, CoVE-MENA incorporated feedback from USAID into its design and facilitation plans. For example, USAID expressed a concern about preparation for the translation and facilitation transitions at the first meeting. In response, CoVE-MENA prepared a Translation and Facilitation plan with details on the role of lead facilitators, hired interpreters, and breakout group facilitators, which was presented at the second. Another matter that required close collaboration was CoVE-MENA's attempt to obtain visas for four potential workshop participants from Libya whose applications were denied. Moreover, USAID Activity Manager Rachel Goldberg and USAID/Morocco Development Specialist/Program Officer Idriss Touijer played important roles at the workshop itself, providing constructive feedback and assisting with breakout groups. USAID/Morocco Mission Director Dana Mansuri and CoVE-MENA COR April Hahn were also able to attend the first day of the workshop.

USAID and CoVE-MENA also coordinated closely on the content, review, and production of the first research study, the Women & VE paper. During the research meeting on August 28, 2015, CoVE-MENA solicited feedback on the paper and its review process, and determined next steps for dissemination. During the same meeting, CoVE-MENA and USAID discussed possibilities for future research studies.

Additionally, a productive quarterly review and coordination meeting was held for Quarter 3 (Q3) on August 7, 2015. Other coordination in Q4 proceeded via regular phone meetings and emails specific to the various aspects of CoVE-MENA (research, training, pilots).

Coordination with Other Agencies

Representatives from CoVE-MENA participated in USIP's July 22-23, 2015 workshop entitled *Evidence for CVE: Advancing Community Based Approaches*, during which Project Manager/Technical

Advisor Jen Heeg presented on CoVE-MENA's research and pilot activities. The purpose of the workshop was to analyze the major gaps in knowledge on what drives VE in local contexts, highlight innovative response and research methodologies, and develop an understanding of the best strategies to foster knowledge-sharing internationally and domestically among researchers and policy makers.

IV. Task Order Activities

Research Studies

Research activities for Q4 have focused on the completion of CoVE-MENA's first study—a report and accompanying brief on Women and Violent Extremism in the MENA region. The report and brief were finalized after a series of consultations with, and reviews by, USAID staff. The Women and VE research brief was finalized ahead of the September 2015 UNGA meeting, and was shared in meetings with interested stakeholders. The CoVE-MENA team share the brief in response to requests from other interested parties, such as the World Bank.

During the After Action Review meeting on August 28, 2015, CoVE-MENA and USAID reflected on the completion of the first research study on Women & VE and its review process. The conversation helped identify ways in which we can improve our collaboration on future studies, and pinpointed three areas of interest for USAID in future research. Throughout the rest of Q4, CoVE-MENA developed concept notes for the next few research studies, which elaborate on the three research topics, including the rationale for the studies, what type of evidence they build on, and options for research design and methodology. The research topics presented for consideration included: LAC Crime and Violence Prevention through a CVE lens; Examining the Relationship Between Governance and Violent Extremism; and Displacement and VEO Recruitment. USAID indicated its interest in moving forward with the first two of these topics.

Training and Knowledge Generation

After the CVE training conducted in Cyprus at the end of Q3, the Workshop Team completed and submitted the workshop report. The report included detailed information regarding the agenda and content as well as detailed outputs from the training.

The Knowledge Generation activity in Q4 was a scoping assessment to determine the most efficient and effective platform for a Community of Practice (CoP) for the Maghreb-Sahel Pilot. The CoVE-MENA Team collected lessons learned from previous CVE CoPs and information on the most efficient CoP platforms. In addition to this research, information on workshop participants' preferred online communication platforms were collected through pre-workshop surveys.

After gathering the results from the scoping assessment, it was decided that, pending the agreement of workshop participants, CoVE-MENA would use a secret Facebook group to create an online network of CVE practitioners after the First Regional Workshop, to be managed by the CoVE-MENA representative in Morocco.

Pilot Activities

Maghreb-Sahel Pilot (Pilot 1)

CoVE-MENA held its First Regional Workshop, entitled *Participatory and Collaborative Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism*, for 32 participants from civil society organizations (CSOs) who work with populations at-risk of recruitment into VEOs in the Maghreb and Sahel. The workshop fostered regional learning and collaboration on countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts in the region; in doing so it provided participants with a space to jointly analyze the problem of VE and explore opportunities for collaborating to counter VE in their respective communities. The workshop, which was designed and facilitated by FHI 360 and the Salam Institute for Peace & Justice, took place from Monday, September 7, 2015 to Thursday, September 10, 2015 in Casablanca, Morocco. This workshop constituted the official launch of the Maghreb-Sahel pilot activity.

By the end of the workshop, participants had developed a strong sense of community and awareness of the importance of collaboration to respond to VE in their communities and across the region. Participants reported an increased level of understanding of the drivers of VE in their communities and enhanced confidence in conducting assessments to inform CVE efforts. Based on the needs and interests expressed by participants throughout the workshop, particularly on the last day, CoVE-MENA committed to five follow-on areas of support: (1) The creation of an online Community of Practice (CoP); (2) Sharing resources, tools, information and events with the group; (3) Sharing workshop documents, materials and photos; (4) Supporting exchanges and trainings for networking and capacity building; and (5) Organizing a Second Regional Workshop within the next year. Following the completion of the First Regional Workshop, both the participants and CoVE-MENA have put in motion some key steps to fulfill the commitments they made. More information on Pilot 1 activities in Q4 is found in CoVE-MENA's Pilot 1 QPR 4.

CVE Interventions Impact Evaluation (Pilot 2)

CoVE-MENA made progress this quarter in defining its concept for Pilot 2, the CVE Interventions Impact Evaluation. CoVE-MENA proposed the CVE Interventions Impact Evaluation idea to USAID on August 7, 2015 and further developed the concept over the remainder of the reporting period.

CoVE-MENA Results Framework

As determined by USAID, CoVE-MENA will develop separate M&E plans, complete with Results Frameworks and Indicator Tables, for each pilot activity. The M&E Plan for the Maghreb-Sahel CSO Pilot is included in the QPR for the Pilot 1.

Given the Task Order purpose and nature of the training and research activities, USAID has not requested an overarching M&E plan for the project. However, CoVE-MENA recognizes the importance of maintaining a focus on the purpose and objectives of CoVE-MENA, and how its three arms (research, pilots, and training) interact in service of these objectives. To that end, Project Manager/Technical Advisor Dr. Heeg met with Ms. Christine MacAulay, USAID/ME Bureau M&E Specialist, in order to develop a Results Framework for CoVE-MENA more broadly. The overarching Results Framework is included in Annex I of this report.

Given the complexity of CoVE-MENA, specifically the unclear relationship between cause and effect of its interventions, the rapidly changing environment, the evolving nature of each activity to be undertaken, and multiple pathways to change, Jen and Christine determined that a general M&E Plan should be adaptable, take learning into account, and allow for the collection of data that might not otherwise fit into predetermined categories. In addition, rather than a Theory of Change, it was decided that CoVE-MENA design its Results Framework around four objectives:

- Interconnections increased
- Learning
- Innovation
- Capacity building

The audience for these objectives ranges from USG Interagency, to USAID program staff, to research audiences, to CSOs in the MENA region. The relative weight afforded to each objective will vary by activity (pilot, research study, and/or training).

Please see CoVE-MENA's QPR for June through September 2015 for the Maghreb-Sahel CSO Pilot Activity for an example of how the Results Framework from a specific activity is connected to this broader plan. A comprehensive set of indicators is also included in a table in the Pilot QPR, as is a general plan for learning and adapting through the use of a complexity-aware lens.

V. Challenges Faced this Quarter

As demonstrated above, CoVE-MENA had a productive fourth quarter. The major challenge faced was in bringing CSO representatives from Libya to the First Regional Workshop workshop. Two of three CSOs invited were unable to send attendees to the workshop because their visa applications were denied. A challenge that CoVE-MENA overcame was determining what kind of platform would be most appropriate for an effective CoP. CoVE-MENA determined that for the workshop group, a secret Facebook group would be most effective, and that in the future CoVE-MENA would reassess how to increase internet community security and whether or not an additional broader CoP should be created to connect participants in all Pilots.

VI. Plans for Next Quarter

Management & Coordination

Several changes in management are anticipated for the coming quarter, for both USAID and CoVE-MENA. For USAID, we anticipate a change in Activity Managers, from Rachel Goldberg to Idriss Touijer. Idriss is coming to USAID/W from USAID/Morocco, and we look forward to collaboration with him particularly on the ongoing pilot, the startup and design of an innovative Impact Evaluation, and other project activities more broadly.

To ensure efficient management and technical oversight of the growing number of CoVE-MENA activities in Year 2, USAID is planning to modify the CoVE-MENA key personnel positions next quarter. It is anticipated that Project Manager/Technical Advisor Jen Heeg will take on a Senior Technical Advisor role, allowing her to spend additional time focusing on the Impact Evaluation

pilot. A part-time Project Manager position will also be created. CoVE-MENA has submitted a Project Manager candidate for USAID approval. Based on the centralization of many tasks in the Washington, DC, office, it is anticipated that the Field Program Representative position for the Maghreb-Sahel pilot will also be modified.

Research Studies

Having completed the first research study, on Women and VE, in the next quarter the CoVE-MENA team plans to further develop its concepts and research plans for two studies: the LAC Crime and Violence Prevention through a CVE lens study, and the Examining the Relationship Between Governance and Violent Extremism study. We will further flesh out the existing concept notes into full proposals, drawing on academic and policy literature. This will give us the ability to present USAID with a feasible research design to address the research questions agreed upon. Finally, in regards to the Women and VE report, we will conduct internal dissemination activities in conjunction with USAID.

Training and Knowledge Generation

The CoVE-MENA Team is awaiting guidance from USAID to proceed with dates and logistics for future trainings, including a potential alumni training in Jordan, a USAID Mission Director's training in Washington D.C., and an executive-level training for USAID/Washington.

Pilot Activities

Pilot 1

After the workshop in Morocco, CoVE-MENA created a Community of Practice through a secret Facebook group. Participants and CoVE-MENA have been actively sharing information and resources. CoVE-MENA also began consolidating its plans for post-workshop follow-on activities through in-kind grants. CoVE-MENA additionally submitted its Workshop Report for USAID's review.

In the coming quarter, CoVE-MENA will be finalizing its process for requesting and accepting proposals from CSOs. We anticipate a process whereby joint proposals, encouraging networking and shared capacity building, will be encouraged wherever feasible. More details about this are found in the Pilot 1 QPR 4.

Pilot 2

CoVE-MENA is in the process of developing a work plan for the CVE Interventions Impact Evaluation. In the upcoming quarter we will work closely with USAID to decide on: (1) the country in which the impact evaluation will take place; and (2) selection of the local implementer and type of program interventions to be evaluated. At the same time we will reach out to potential researchers with expertise in conducting impact evaluations around CVE or stability programming and elicit their ideas on the refinement of the concept note into a proposal which we will provide to USAID by the end of this quarter.

Annex I: Results Framework for the CoVE-MENA Task Order

